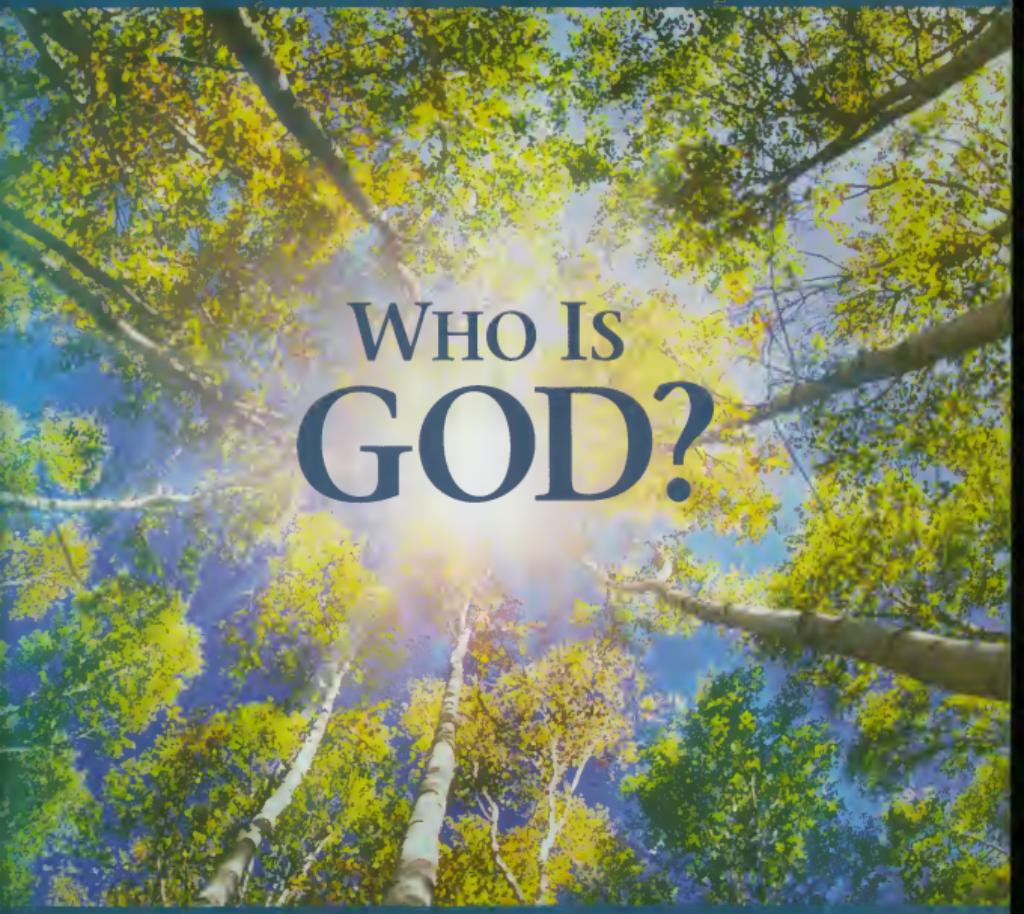


FEBRUARY 1, 2009

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



WHO Is
GOD?

THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE, *The Watchtower*, is to honor Jehovah God, the Supreme Ruler of the universe. Just as watchtowers in ancient times enabled a person to observe developments from afar, so this magazine shows us the significance of world events in the light of Bible prophecies. It comforts people with the good news that God's Kingdom, which is a real government in heaven, will soon bring an end to all wickedness and transform the earth into a paradise. It promotes faith in Jesus Christ, who died so that we might gain everlasting life and who is now ruling as King of God's Kingdom. This magazine has been published by Jehovah's Witnesses continuously since 1879 and is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

This publication is not for sale. It is provided as part of a worldwide Bible educational work supported by voluntary donations. Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the modern-language New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures—With References.

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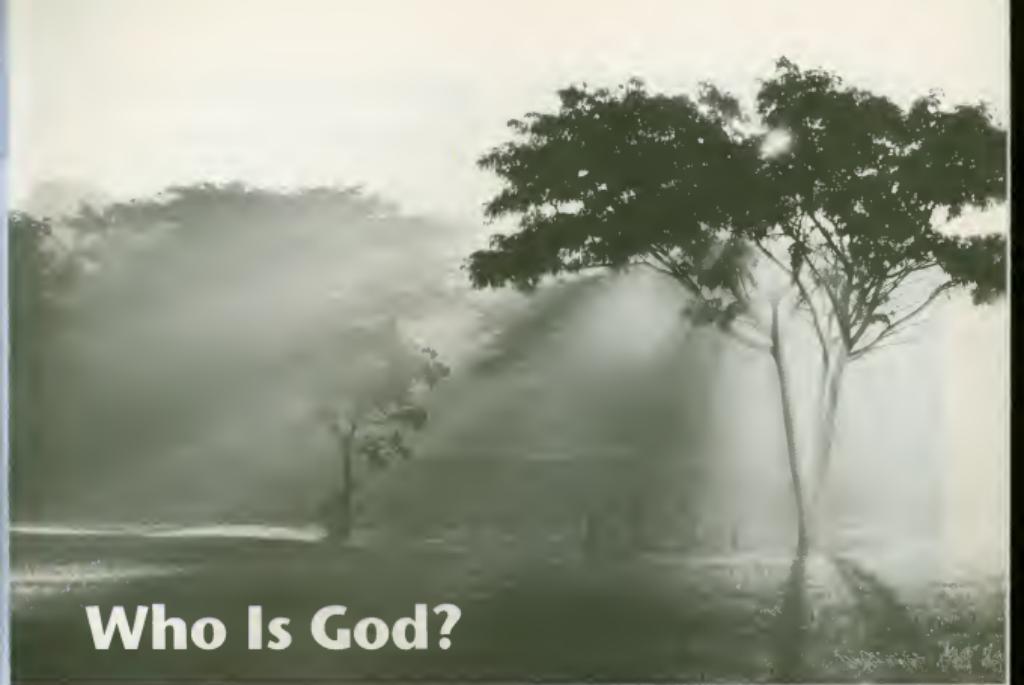
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The Watchtower (ISSN 0043-10B7) is published semimonthly by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.; M. H. Larson, President; C. F. Simonis, Secretary-Treasurer; 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, NY 11201-2483. Periodicals Postage Paid at Brooklyn, NY, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Watchtower, 1000 Red Mills Road, Wallkill, NY 12589-3299.

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Semimonthly

ENGLISH



Who Is God?

HOW would you answer that question? Some feel that they know God well—that he is a close friend. Others view God more as a distant relative. They believe that he exists but know little about him. If you believe in God, how would you answer the questions listed below?

- 1. Is God a real person?**
- 2. Does God have a name?**
- 3. Is Jesus Almighty God?**
- 4. Does God care about me?**
- 5. Does God accept all forms of worship?**

If you ask others to answer these questions, you will likely receive an astonishing array of responses. Little wonder, then, that myths and wrong perceptions have developed concerning God.

Why the Answers Matter

While speaking with a religious woman he met at a well, Jesus Christ emphasized the need to know the truth about God. This woman, a Samaritan, acknowledged that Jesus was a prophet. But something bothered her. Jesus' religion was different from hers. When she expressed this concern, Jesus plainly said to her: "You worship what you do not know." (John 4:19-22) Obviously, Jesus felt that not all religious people truly know God.

Does Jesus' statement mean that no one can really know God? No. Jesus went on to say to this woman: "True worshipers will worship the Father with spirit and truth, for, indeed, the Father is looking for suchlike ones to worship him." (John 4:23) Are you

among those who worship God "with spirit and truth"?

It is of utmost importance for you to make sure of the answer to that question. Why? Jesus highlighted the need for accurate knowledge when he prayed: "This means everlasting life, their taking in knowledge of you, the only true God, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ." (John 17:3) Yes, your very prospects for future life are closely connected with your knowing the truth about God!

Is it really possible to know the truth about God? Yes, it is! How, then, can you find it? Jesus said this about himself: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6) He also stated: "Who the Father is, no one knows but the Son, and he to whom the Son is willing to reveal him."—Luke 10:22.

So the key to knowing God is found in the teachings of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. In fact, Jesus promises us: "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."—John 8:31, 32, *The Holy Bible—New International Version*.

How, then, would Jesus answer the five questions raised earlier?



**Do you worship a God
you do not really know?**

THE WATCHTOWER ANNOUNCING JEROVAH'S KINGDOM

Would you welcome more information or a free home Bible study? Please send your request to Jehovah's Witnesses, using one of the addresses below. For a complete list of addresses, see www.watchtower.org/address.

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Bag X2067, Krugersdorp, 1740. **Trinidad and Tobago:** Lower Rapiey Street & Laxmi Lane, Curepe.

NOW PUBLISHED IN 172 LANGUAGES including Afrikaans, Albanian, Amharic, Arabic, Armenian, Armenian (West), Aymara, Azerbaijani, Azerbaijani (Cyrillic), Baoulé, Bengali, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Cambodian, Cebuano, Chichewa, Chinese (Simplified), Chitonga, Chuukese, Cibemba, Croatian, Czech,^{**} Danish, Dutch,^{**} Eli English^{**} (also Braille), Estonian, Ewe, Fijian, Finnish,^{**} French,^{**} Ga, Georgian, German,^{**} Gilbertese, Greek, Greenlandic, Guarani, Gujerati, Gun, Haitian Creole, Hausa, Hebrew, Hiligaynon, Hindi, Hiri Motu, Hungarian,^{**} Icelandic, Igbo, Iloko, Indonesian, Isoko, Italian,^{**} Japanese,^{**} Kannada, Kaonde, Kazakh, Kitikogo, Kiliwa, Kirinyarwanda, Kirghiz, Kirundi, Kongo, Korean,^{**} Kosraean, Kwanyama/Ndonga, Latvian, Lingala, Lithuanian, Luganda, Lunda, Luo, Luvale, Macedonian, Malagasy, Malayalam, Maltese, Marathi, Marshallese, Mauritian Creole, Maya, Mizo,

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Is God a Real Person?

JESUS never referred to God as some abstract force. On the contrary, he talked to God and prayed to him. He often called Jehovah his heavenly Father, a term revealing his deep intimacy with God.—John 8:19, 38, 54.

It is true that “no man has seen God at any time” and that “God is a Spirit.” (John 1:18; 4:24) But this does not mean that he is without any type of body or form. The Bible tells us: “If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual one.” (1 Corinthians 15:44) So does Jehovah have a spiritual body?

Yes. When Jesus was resurrected, he “entered . . . into heaven itself, now to appear before the person of God for us.” (Hebrews 9:24) This teaches us two important facts about God. First, he has a place of dwelling. Second, he is a Person, not simply an indefinable force that resides everywhere.

Like a father who extends his hand,
God extends his holy spirit to accomplish
his purpose



Common answers:

- “He is everywhere, in everything. He is like the wind.”
- “He is an indefinable intelligence, an abstract force.”

What did Jesus say?

- “In the house of my Father there are many abodes.” (John 14:2) Jesus spoke of God as having a figurative house, or dwelling place.
- “I came out from the Father and have come into the world. Further, I am leaving the world and am going my way to the Father.” (John 16:28) Jesus believed that God is an actual Person living in a specific location.

How, then, can God’s influence be felt everywhere? God can send his holy spirit, or power in action, to any place in the universe. Like a father who extends his hand to console and support his children, God extends his holy spirit to accomplish his purpose.—Psalm 104:30; 139:7.

Because God is a Person, he also has a personality with likes and dislikes—even feelings. The Bible tells us that he loves his people, rejoices in his works, hates idolatry, and feels hurt over wickedness. (Genesis 6:6; Deuteronomy 16:22; 1 Kings 10:9; Psalm 104:31) At 1 Timothy 1:11, he is called “the happy God.” No wonder Jesus said that we can learn to love this God with our whole heart!—Mark 12:30.*

* For more information on this subject, see chapter 1 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.

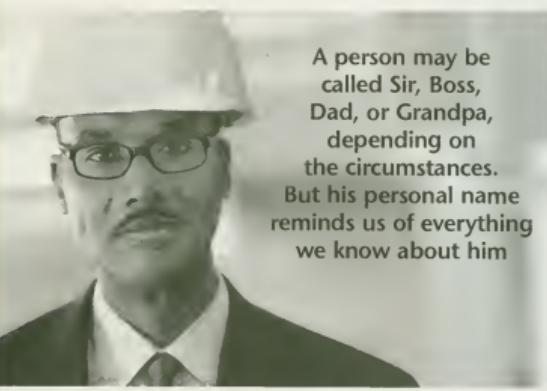
Does God Have a Name?

GOD himself tells us his name. He is recorded as saying: "I am Jehovah, that is my name."* (Isaiah 42:8, *American Standard Version*) The name Jehovah is the best-known English form of the Hebrew name God gave himself. It may surprise you that this unique Hebrew name appears thousands of times in ancient Bible manuscripts. In fact, it appears more often than any other name mentioned in the Bible.

Some may answer the question, "What is God's name?" by saying, "the Lord." Really, though, that is no more informative than it would be to answer the question, "Who won the election?" by saying, "the candidate." Neither provides a clear answer, since "Lord" and "candidate" are not names.

Why did God reveal his name to us? He did

* For an explanation of the meaning of God's name, as well as why some versions of the Bible do not contain it, you may want to consult pages 195-197 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah's Witnesses.



A person may be called Sir, Boss, Dad, or Grandpa, depending on the circumstances. But his personal name reminds us of everything we know about him

Common answers:

- "His name is the Lord."
- "He doesn't have a personal name."

What did Jesus say?

- "You must pray, then, this way: 'Our Father in the heavens, let your name be sanctified.'" (Matthew 6:9) Jesus believed that God has a name.
- "I have made your name known to them and will make it known, in order that the love with which you loved me may be in them and I in union with them." (John 17:26) Jesus made God's name known.
- "You will by no means see me until you say, 'Blessed is he that comes in Jehovah's name.'" (Luke 13:35; Psalm 118:26) Jesus used God's name.

it so that we can come to know him better. To illustrate, a person may be called Sir, Boss, Dad, or Grandpa, depending on the circumstances. These titles reveal something about him. But the name of the person reminds us of everything we know about him. Likewise, titles such as Lord, Almighty, Father, and Creator call attention to different facets of God's activities. But only his personal name, Jehovah, reminds us of everything we know about him. How can you really know God without knowing his name?

It is important not only to know but also to use that name. Why? Because the Bible tells us: "Everyone who calls on the name of Jehovah will be saved."—Romans 10:13; Joel 2:32.

Is Jesus Almighty God?

JESUS claimed to be the Son of God, not Almighty God. If Jesus were God, to whom was he praying while here on earth? (Matthew 14:23; 26:26-29) Surely Jesus was not just pretending to talk to someone else!

When two of Jesus' disciples asked him for special positions in his Kingdom, he answered: "This sitting down at my right hand and at my left is not mine to give, but it belongs to those for whom it has been prepared by my Father." (Matthew 20:23) Was Jesus telling them a lie when he stated that he did not have the authority to grant their request? Hardly! Rather, he humbly acknowledged that only God has the authority to make such decisions. Jesus even explained that there were some things that neither he nor the angels knew but that were known only by his Father.—Mark 13:32.

Was Jesus lower than God only while he was a man here on earth? No. Even after his death and resurrection, Jesus is described in the Bi-

Jesus said there were some things that neither he nor the angels knew but that were known only by his Father

Common answers:

- "Yes, Jesus is God Almighty."
- "Jesus was the manifestation of God in the flesh."

What did Jesus say?

- "If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going my way to the Father, because the Father is greater than I am." (John 14:28) Jesus acknowledged that he and his Father are not equals.
- "I am ascending to my Father and your Father and to my God and your God." (John 20:17) Jesus did not speak of himself as God but spoke of God as a separate Person.
- "I have not spoken out of my own impulse, but the Father himself who sent me has given me a commandment as to what to tell and what to speak." (John 12:49) Jesus' teachings did not come from him; they came from the Father.

ble as being subordinate to God. The apostle Paul reminds us that "God is supreme over Christ." (1 Corinthians 11:3, *Today's English Version*) The Bible says that in the future "when all things have been placed under Christ's rule, then he himself, the Son, will place himself under God, who placed all things under him; and God will rule completely over all."—1 Corinthians 15:28, TEV.

Clearly, Jesus is not God Almighty. That is why he spoke of his Father as "my God."—Revelation 3:2, 12; 2 Corinthians 1:3, 4.*

* For more information on this subject, see pages 201-204 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

Does God Care About Me?

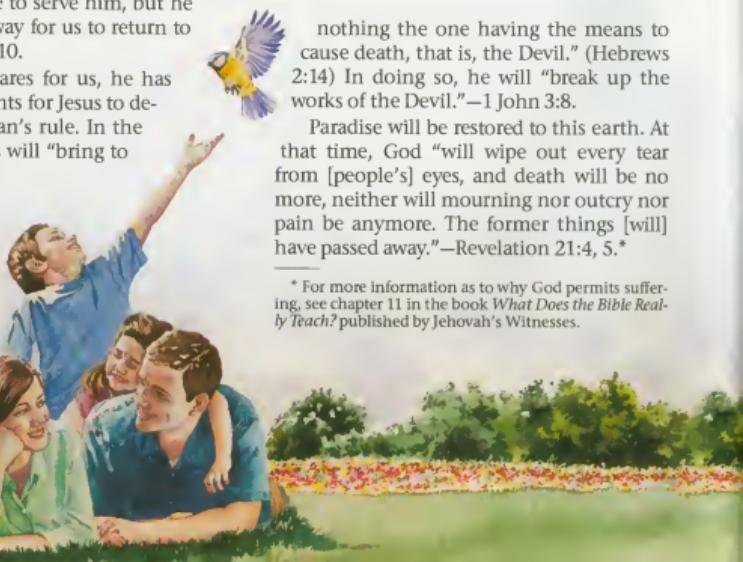
THE Bible definitely states that God cares about us. (Psalm 55:22; 1 Peter 5:7) If he does, then why do we experience so much suffering today? If God is loving and all-powerful, why does he not do something to end suffering?

The answer involves a little-known fact—Satan the Devil is the ruler of this wicked world. When tempting Jesus, Satan offered him all the kingdoms of the world, saying: "I will give you all this authority and the glory of them, because it has been delivered to me, and to whomever I wish I give it."—Luke 4:5-7.

Who made Satan the ruler of the world? When our first parents, Adam and Eve, obeyed Satan and turned their backs on God, they, in effect, chose Satan as their ruler. Since that rebellion, Jehovah God has patiently allowed time to show that Satan's rulership is a miserable failure. Jehovah has not forced people to serve him, but he has opened the way for us to return to him.—Romans 5:10.

Because God cares for us, he has made arrangements for Jesus to deliver us from Satan's rule. In the near future, Jesus will "bring to

Paradise
will be restored
to this earth



Common answers:

- "God is too important to be worried about my problems."
- "I don't think that he is concerned about me."

What did Jesus say?

- "Five sparrows sell for two coins of small value, do they not? Yet not one of them goes forgotten before God. But even the hairs of your heads are all numbered. Have no fear; you are worth more than many sparrows." (Luke 12:6, 7) Undoubtedly, Jesus taught that God cares about us.
- "Never be anxious and say, 'What are we to eat?' or, 'What are we to drink?' or, 'What are we to put on?' For all these are the things the nations are eagerly pursuing. For your heavenly Father knows you need all these things." (Matthew 6:31, 32) Jesus believed that God knows our personal needs.

nothing the one having the means to cause death, that is, the Devil." (Hebrews 2:14) In doing so, he will "break up the works of the Devil."—1 John 3:8.

Paradise will be restored to this earth. At that time, God "will wipe out every tear from [people's] eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things [will] have passed away."—Revelation 21:4, 5.*

* For more information as to why God permits suffering, see chapter 11 in the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

Does God Accept All Forms of Worship?

MANY religious people treasure their own beliefs and traditions. But what happens if these teachings are not in harmony with what is found in God's Word, the Bible? Jesus showed the danger of following man-made traditions when he said to the religious leaders of his day: "You have made the word of God invalid because of your tradition." He then went on to quote these words of God: "This people honors me with their lips, yet their heart is far removed from me. It is in vain that they keep worshiping me, because they teach commands of men as doctrines."—Matthew 15:1-9; Isaiah 29:13.

Conduct is also important, not just beliefs. The Bible says of some who claim to worship God: "They publicly declare they know God, but they disown him by their works." (Titus 1:16) In fact, the Bible says of those living in our time: "Instead of loving God, they will love pleasure. Even though they will make a show of being religious, their religion won't be real. Don't have anything to do with such people."—2 Timothy 3:4, 5, *Contemporary English Version*.

Right religion involves right motive, right belief, and right action



Common answers:

- "All religions are paths leading to God."
- "It doesn't matter what you believe if you are sincere."

What did Jesus say?

- "Go in through the narrow gate; because broad and spacious is the road leading off into destruction, and many are the ones going in through it; whereas narrow is the gate and cramped the road leading off into life, and few are the ones finding it." (Matthew 7:13, 14) Jesus did not believe that all roads lead to God.
- "Many will say to me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and expel demons in your name, and perform many powerful works in your name?' And yet then I will confess to them: I never knew you! Get away from me, you workers of lawlessness." (Matthew 7:22, 23) Jesus does not accept all those who claim to follow him.

Sincerity is required, but more is needed. Why? Because a person can be sincerely wrong. So accurate knowledge about God is vital. (Romans 10:2, 3) Taking in this knowledge and acting in harmony with what the Bible says will enable us to be pleasing to God. (Matthew 7:21) Really, then, right religion involves right motive, right belief, and right action. And right action means doing the will of God daily!—1 John 2:17.

If you would like to know more regarding what the Bible tells us about God, contact Jehovah's Witnesses for a free home Bible study.

Disciplining Children

*John:** Before my parents punished me for some wrongdoing, they would put forth real effort to understand my motive and the circumstances involved. I try to imitate their approach when dealing with my daughters. My wife, Alison, comes from a different background. Her father and mother were more impulsive. They seem to have chastised their children without being concerned about the circumstances surrounding an incident. Sometimes I feel that my wife disciplines our children in a similarly harsh manner.

Carol: My father deserted our family when I was just five years old. He showed no interest in me or my three siblings. My mom worked very hard to provide for us, and I shouldered a lot of responsibility in caring for my younger sisters. It was hard to enjoy being a kid when I had to play the role of parent. To this day, I am more serious than playful. When my own children need discipline, I agonize over their mistakes. I like to know why something happened and what the thought process was. My husband, Mark, by contrast, doesn't stew over matters. He was raised by a loving yet firm father, who loyally cared for his mother. With our girls, my husband is quick to resolve problems. He assesses a situation, deals with it, and then moves on.

* Names have been changed.



AS THE comments of John and Carol show, your upbringing can exert a profound influence on the way you discipline your own children. When a husband and wife come from different family backgrounds, they are likely to have very different leanings when it comes to training children. At times, these differences cause tension in a marriage.

Tension can be exacerbated by exhaustion. New parents soon learn that disciplining children is a tiring, full-time job. Joan, who with her husband, Darren, has raised two girls, says: "I love my girls, but they seldom wanted to go to bed when I wanted them to. They woke up when it was most in-

convenient. They interrupted when I wanted to talk. They left their shoes, clothes, and toys out and never put the butter back in the fridge."

Jack, whose wife suffered from postpartum depression after their second child, says: "I would often come home exhausted from work and then be up half the night with our newborn. This made it a challenge to discipline our older daughter consistently. She was jealous at having to share our attention with her little sister."

When tired parents clash over how to train a child, small disputes might explode into major arguments. Unresolved disagreements can become a wedge that drives a couple apart and provides an opening for a child to play one parent against the other. What Bible principles will help a couple maintain a close marital bond while effectively training their children?

Make Time for Your Marriage

Marriage should exist before the children arrive, and it is intended to remain long after they leave home. Regarding the marriage union, the Bible says: "What God has yoked together let no man put apart." (Matthew 19:6) By contrast, this same passage shows that God intended for a child eventually to "leave his father and his mother." (Matthew 19:5) Really, any raising of children is only a phase of a marriage, not the basis of it. Certainly, parents need to invest time in training their children, but they do well to remember that a strong marriage is the best foundation upon which to do so.

What is one way in which a couple can keep their relationship strong during the child-rearing years? If at all possible, regularly set aside some time to spend together *without* the children. Doing so will allow you to discuss important family issues and just to enjoy each other's company. Admit-

tedly, making time to spend together as a couple is not easy. Alison, the mother referred to earlier, says, "Just when it seems that my husband and I might have a few moments together, our youngest daughter demands attention or our six-year-old experiences some 'crisis,' like not being able to find her crayons."

Joan and Darren, mentioned earlier, made time for each other by enforcing a set time for their girls to go to bed. "Our girls were always required to be in bed and ready for 'lights out' at a fixed time," says Joan. "That gave Darren and me time to unwind and to talk."

By establishing a regular bedtime routine for their children, a couple not only buy out some time for themselves but also help a child not to "think more of himself [or herself] than it is necessary to think." (Romans 12:3) Eventually, children who are trained to respect bedtime rules realize that they are a vital spoke in the family wheel but are not the hub of it—they must conform to the family's routine rather than expect the family's routine to conform to their whims.

TRY THIS: Establish a regular bedtime and enforce it consistently. If your child offers a reason why he or she should stay up a little longer, such as wanting a glass of water, you might want to allow one request. But do not let your child postpone bedtime indefinitely with an endless string of requests. If your child pleads to stay up an extra five minutes and you want to grant the wish, set an alarm clock to ring in five minutes. When the bell sounds, put the child to bed without further concessions. Let your "Yes mean Yes, your No, No."—Matthew 5:37.

Present a United Front

"Listen, my son, to the discipline of your father, and do not forsake the law of your

mother," states a wise proverb. (Proverbs 1:8) This Bible verse implies that both father and mother have the right to exercise authority over their children. However, even when a couple come from similar family backgrounds, they may disagree about how a child should be disciplined and what family rules should apply in a particular situation. How can parents deal with that challenge?

John, quoted earlier, says, "I feel that it is important not to disagree in front of the children." However, he admits that presenting a united front is more easily said than done. "Children are very perceptive," John says. "Even if a disagreement is not stated, our daughter can pick up on the emotions."

How do John and Alison handle this challenge? Alison says: "If I disagree with the way my husband is disciplining our daughter, I wait until she is out of hearing range before I offer my input. I don't want her to think that she can 'divide and conquer' by playing on our different points of view. If she realizes that we disagree, I tell her that every member of the family has to follow Jehovah's arrangement and that I willingly submit to her father's headship just as she should submit to our authority as parents." (1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 6:1-3) John says: "When we are together as a family, I usually take the lead in disciplining our daughters. But if Alison is more familiar with a situation, I allow her to initiate the discipline and then I back her up. If I disagree with her about something, I'll discuss it with her later."

ASK YOURSELF . . .

- *How much time do I spend with my mate each week without the children around?*
- *In what way do I support my spouse when he or she disciplines our children?*

How can you prevent disagreements about child training from building resentment between you and your mate—and, as a consequence, undermining your children's respect for you?

TRY THIS: Pick a regular time each week to talk about child-training issues, and openly discuss any disagreements you may have. Try to see your spouse's point of view, and respect the fact that your spouse has his or her own relationship with the child.

Grow Together as Parents

Without a doubt, training children is hard work. At times, the task may seem to be all-consuming. Sooner or later, though, your children will leave home, and you and your spouse will feel more like a couple again. Will your marriage bond be strengthened or strained by the experience of raising children? The answer will depend on how well you apply the principle found at Ecclesiastes 4:9, 10: "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their hard work. For if one of them should fall, the other one can raise his partner up."

When parents work as partners, the results can be very satisfying. Carol, quoted earlier, expresses her feelings this way: "I knew that my husband had a lot of great qualities, but raising children together has shown me a whole new side of him. My respect and love for him have grown as I've watched the way he lovingly cared for our girls." John says of Alison, "Seeing the way my wife has developed into a caring mother has deepened my love and admiration for her."

If you make time for your spouse and work as a team during your child-rearing years, your marriage will grow stronger as your children grow older. What better example could you set for your children?

What Is in a Name?

An Ethiopian woman gives birth to a baby boy. But her joy turns to grief when she sees the child lie motionless. When the grandmother takes the limp little body to bathe it, the boy suddenly begins to move and breathe and cry! The name of the baby's father means "Miracle," so the parents combine that name with another Amharic word and call the boy A Miracle Has Been Done.

In Burundi, a young man flees from soldiers who are out to kill him. While hiding in a field, the man vows that if God saves him, he will call his firstborn Manirakiza, meaning "God Is the Savior." Five years later, grateful to be alive, the man gives his firstborn son that name.

GIVING children names that have a specific meaning may seem unusual to some, but this custom has ancient roots. In fact, the Bible contains hundreds of such names. Understanding the meaning of various individuals' names will enhance your Bible reading. Consider just some examples.

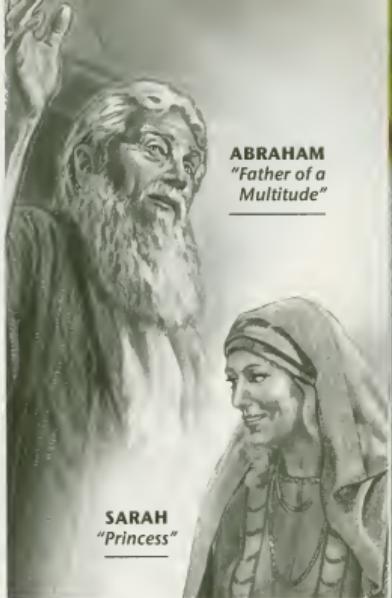
Meaningful Names in the Hebrew Scriptures

Among the first names recorded in the Bible is that of Seth, meaning "Appointed." Seth's mother, Eve, explained why she chose that name, saying: "God has appointed another seed in place of Abel, because Cain killed him." (Genesis 4:25) Seth's descendant Lamech named his son Noah, meaning "Rest" or "Consolation." Lamech said he gave his son that name because "this one will bring us comfort from our work

and from the pain of our hands resulting from the ground which Jehovah has cursed." —Genesis 5:29.

God himself changed the names of certain adults for prophetic purposes. For example, he changed the name of Abram, meaning "Father Is Exalted," to Abraham, meaning "Father of a Multitude." True to his name, Abraham did become the father of many nations. (Genesis 17:5, 6) Consider, too, Abraham's wife, Sarai, possibly meaning "Contentious." How happy she must have been when God renamed her "Sarah," meaning "Princess," alluding to her becoming an ancestress of kings.—Genesis 17:15, 16.

God also personally chose the name of some children. For example, he told Abraham and Sarah to name their son Isaac, meaning "Laughter." That name would constantly remind this faithful couple of their reaction to the news that they would have a



ABRAHAM
"Father of a Multitude"

SARAH
"Princess"

son in their old age. When Isaac grew up to be a faithful servant of God, his name no doubt continued to bring a smile to the faces of Abraham and Sarah as they enjoyed the company of this beloved son.—Genesis 17:17, 19; 18:12, 15; 21:6.

Isaac's daughter-in-law Rachel gave her last son his name for a very different reason. While on her deathbed, Rachel called the child Ben-oni, meaning "Son of My Mourning." Her bereaved husband, Jacob, slightly altered the name to Benjamin, meaning "Son of the Right Hand." This name signified a position not only of favor but also of support.—Genesis 35:16-19; 44:20.

Names were sometimes given or taken in harmony with the physical characteristics of the person. For instance, Isaac and Rebekah had a son who was born with red hair as thick as a wool garment, so they named him Esau. Why? In Hebrew that name means "Hairy." (Genesis 25:25) As noted in the book of Ruth, Naomi had two sons. One was named Mahlon, meaning "Sickly, Invalid," and the other Chilion, meaning "Frailty." Whether these names were given at birth or later is not stated, but they seem to be fitting, given the early demise of these two young men.—Ruth 1:5.

Another common practice was that of changing or adjusting names. On returning to Bethlehem, destitute after losing her husband and sons, Naomi no longer wanted to be called by that name, meaning "My Pleasantness." Instead, she insisted: "Do not call me Naomi. Call me Mara [meaning "Bitter"], for the Almighty has made it very bitter for me."—Ruth 1:20, 21.

Yet another custom was to name a child in honor of a significant event. The prophet Haggai's name, for example, means "Born on a Festival."⁴

Significant Names in the Christian Era

Jesus' name has great prophetic significance. Before his birth, his parents were divinely instructed: "You must call his name Jesus," the name meaning "Jehovah Is Salvation." The reason? "He will save his people from their sins," said the angel who spoke to Joseph.

⁴ Many of Jehovah's Witnesses in Africa have names that are connected with the titles of Witness conventions and assemblies held when they were born.

Who Was Immanuel?

Some names of individuals in the Bible were prophetic and describe the work the person would do. For example, the prophet Isaiah was inspired to write: "Look! The maiden herself will actually become pregnant, and she is giving birth to a son, and she will certainly call his name Immanuel." (Isaiah 7:14) This name means "With Us Is God." Some Bible commentators have tried to link the first fulfillment of this prophecy with one of the Israelite kings or one of Isaiah's sons. However, the Gospel writer Matthew showed that Isaiah's prophecy was completely fulfilled in Jesus.—Matthew 1:22, 23.

Some have claimed that by applying the name Immanuel to Jesus, the Bible teaches that Jesus is God. However, by this logic the young man Elihu, who comforted and corrected Job, was also God. Why? His name means "My God Is He."

Jesus never claimed to be God. (John 14:28; Philippians 2:5, 6) But he did reflect his Father's personality perfectly, and he fulfilled all of God's promises regarding the Messiah. (John 14:9; 2 Corinthians 1:20) The name Immanuel well describes Jesus' role as the Messianic Seed, a descendant of David, the one who proves that God is with those who worship Him.

(Matthew 1:21) After Jesus was anointed with holy spirit at his baptism, his name was combined with the Hebrew designation "Messiah." In Greek, this same title is rendered "Christ." Both expressions mean "the Anointed One."—Matthew 2:4.

Jesus himself chose descriptive names for some of his disciples. For instance, he gave Simon the Semitic name Cephas, meaning "Rock." Cephas became better known by the Greek rendering of this name, which is translated "Peter." (John 1:42) Jesus called the zealous brothers James and John "Boanerges," meaning "Sons of Thunder." —Mark 3:16, 17.



The Most Significant Name

The personal name of God appears some 7,000 times throughout the Bible. This name, as represented by the four Hebrew characters יהוה, is most commonly rendered "Jehovah" in English. What is the significance of that name? When Moses asked about God's name, Jehovah replied: "I Will Become whatsoever I please." (Exodus 3:14, *The Emphasised Bible*, by J. B. Rotherham) God's personal name, therefore, is a guarantee that he will become whatever is needed in order to fulfill his purposes. (Isaiah 55:8-11) When God makes a promise, we can confidently build our lives around it. Why? Because his name is Jehovah.

What would be an appropriate name to describe my reputation?



Jesus' disciples continued the practice of giving appropriate surnames. One example is that of the disciple Joseph, whom the apostles named Barnabas, meaning "Son of Comfort." Barnabas lived up to his name, bringing both physical and spiritual comfort to many.—Acts 4:34-37; 9:27; 15:25, 26.

The Importance of Your Name

We have no control over the name given to us at birth. However, we alone determine the reputation that we acquire. (Proverbs 20:11) Why not ask yourself: If Jesus or the apostles had the opportunity, what name would they choose for me? What would be an appropriate name to describe my dominant quality or my reputation?

This question deserves serious thought. Why? "A name is to be chosen rather than abundant riches," wrote wise King Solomon. (Proverbs 22:1) Certainly, if we gain a good name, or reputation, in the community, we have a valuable asset. More important, though, if we make a good name with God, we will acquire a lasting treasure. How so? God promises that he will write in his "book of remembrance" the names of those who fear him, and he will grant them the prospect of everlasting life.—Malachi 3:16; Revelation 3:5; 20:12-15.

About Prayers That God Hears

Jesus would often seek a private place to pray, and he recommended that his followers do the same. The Bible says: "On the occasion of his being in a certain place praying, when he stopped, a certain one of his disciples said to him: 'Lord, teach us how to pray' . . . He said to them: 'Whenever you pray, say, "Father, let your name be sanctified.'"'" (Luke 5:16; 11:1, 2) Thus Jesus showed that prayers should be directed to his Father, Jehovah. He alone is our Creator and the "Hearer of prayer."—Psalm 65:2.

Do all prayers please God?

The repetition of memorized prayers does not please God. Jesus said: "When praying, do not say the same things over and over again." (Matthew 6:7) We must speak with our heavenly Father from the heart. Once, Jesus emphasized to his followers that the prayers of a sinful person who sincerely wanted to change were more acceptable to God than the prayers of a proud man who carefully observed religious customs. (Luke 18:10-14) So for our prayers to be heard, we should humbly be seeking to do what God tells us. Even Jesus said: "Just as the Father taught me I speak these things . . . I always do the things pleasing to him." (John 8:28, 29) Jesus said in prayer: "Let, not my will, but yours take place."—Luke 22:42.



**For more information,
see chapter 17 of the book
*What Does the Bible
Really Teach?****

* Published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

What should we pray for?

Since God's name has been maligned, Jesus said: "You must pray, then, this way: 'Our Father in the heavens, let your name be sanctified. Let your kingdom come. Let your will take place, as in heaven, also upon earth.'" (Matthew 6:9, 10) We should pray for God's Kingdom to come because it is the government that God will use to accomplish his will in heaven and on earth. Jesus said that we can pray for "our bread for the day." We can also ask Jehovah about employment, shelter, clothing, health matters, and other concerns. In addition, Jesus said that we should pray for forgiveness.—Luke 11:3, 4.

Should we pray for others?

Jesus prayed for others. The Bible tells us: "Young children were brought to him, for him to put his hands upon them and offer prayer." (Matthew 19:13) Jesus said to the apostle Peter: "I have made supplication for you that your faith may not give out." (Luke 22:32) Jesus encouraged his followers to pray for others, even for those persecuting them and those insulting them.—Matthew 5:44; Luke 6:28.

Why should we persevere in prayer?

Jesus dedicated time to prayer and encouraged his followers "always to pray and not to give up." (Luke 18:1) Jehovah invites us to express our confidence in him by speaking to him repeatedly about things that concern us. "Keep on asking, and it will be given you," said Jesus. But this does not mean that Jehovah is reluctant to respond to those who love and respect him as a Father. Rather, Jesus said: "If you, although being wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more so will the Father in heaven give holy spirit to those asking him!"—Luke 11:5-13.



The Greatest Proof of God's Love

Genesis 22:1-18

ABRAHAM loved God. That faithful patriarch also loved Isaac, the son of his old age. But when Isaac was possibly 25 years old, Abraham faced a test that went against the natural instincts of a father—God told him to sacrifice his son. The story, however, did not end in Isaac's death. At the critical moment, God intervened by means of an angel. This Bible account, recorded at Genesis 22:1-18, gives us a prophetic glimpse into God's great love for us.

"God put Abraham to the test," says verse 1. Abraham was a man of faith, but now his faith would be tested as never before. God said: "Take, please, your son, your only son whom you so love, Isaac, and . . . offer him up as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I shall designate to you." (Verse 2) Remember, God does not allow his servants to be tried beyond what they can bear. So this test showed his confidence in Abraham.—1 Corinthians 10:13.

Abraham responded with prompt obedience. We read: "Abraham got up early in the morning and saddled his ass and took two of his attendants with him and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering. Then he rose and went on the trip." (Verse 3) Abraham evidently kept the details of the test to himself.

A three-day trip followed, giving time for somber reflection. But Abraham's resolve did not weaken. The words he spoke revealed his faith. Upon seeing the selected mountain in the distance, he told his servants: "You stay here



. . . , but I and the boy want to go on over there and worship and return to you." When Isaac asked where the sheep was for the offering, Abraham said: "God will provide himself the sheep." (Verses 5, 8) Abraham expected to return with his son. Why? Because "he reckoned that God was able to raise him [Isaac] up even from the dead." —Hebrews 11:19.

Up on the mountain, when Abraham took the "knife to kill his son," an angel stayed his hand. God then provided a ram, caught in the thicket, that Abraham could offer up "in place of his son." (Verses 10-13) In God's eyes, it was as if Isaac had actually been sacrificed. (Hebrews 11:17) "Before God," explains one scholar, "the willingness was reckoned as equal to the deed."

Jehovah's confidence in Abraham was vindicated. And Abraham's confidence in Jehovah was rewarded, for God repeated and enlarged upon his covenant with Abraham, which covenant promised blessings for people of all the nations.—Verses 15-18.

In the end, God spared Abraham the sacrifice that He would not spare himself. Abraham's willingness to offer up Isaac foreshadowed God's offering of his only-begotten Son, Jesus, for our sins. (John 3:16) The sacrifice of Christ is the greatest proof of Jehovah's love for us. Since God made such a sacrifice for us, we do well to ask ourselves, 'What sacrifices am I willing to make in order to please God?'

Did You Know?

Was the leprosy described in the Bible the same as the disease known by that name today?

The medical term "leprosy" as used today refers to a human bacterial infection. This bacteria (*Mycobacterium leprae*) was first identified by Dr. G.A. Hansen in 1873. Researchers have discovered that the bacteria can survive outside the body in nasal secretions for up to nine days. They have also found that people in close association with leprosy patients have a greater chance of contracting the disease and that contaminated clothing is a possible source of infection. According to the World Health Organization, more than 220,000 new cases of leprosy were reported in 2007.

There is no doubt that leprosy afflicted people in the Middle East in Biblical times, and the Mosaic Law required that a person with leprosy be quarantined. (Leviticus 13:4, 5) However, the Hebrew word *tsa-ra'ath* translated "leprosy" was not confined to a medical condition. *Tsa-ra'ath* also affected clothing and houses. This kind of leprosy could appear in

woolen or linen garments or in anything made of leather. In some cases, it could be eliminated by washing, but if a "yellowish-green or reddish plague" persisted, the garment or leather was to be burned. (Leviticus 13:47-52) In houses, the plague manifested itself as "yellowish-green or reddish depressions" in a wall. Affected stones and mortar were to be removed and discarded—away from human habitation. If the leprosy returned, the building was to be demolished and the materials disposed of. (Leviticus 14:33-45) Some suggest that the leprosy in garments or houses might have described what is now called mildew or mold. However, this cannot be stated with certainty.

Why did the apostle Paul's preaching in Ephesus cause an uproar among the silversmiths?

The silversmiths of Ephesus prospered by making "silver shrines of Artemis," patroness of Ephesus, a goddess of hunting, fertility, and childbirth. (Acts 19:24) Her image was reputed to have fallen "from heaven" and was housed at the temple of Artemis in Eph-

esus. (Acts 19:35) This temple was viewed as one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Crowds of pilgrims flocked to Ephesus during March/April each year to attend festivals honoring Artemis. The influx of visitors generated demand for cult objects, used either as souvenirs, amulets, or offerings to the goddess or for family worship once the pilgrims returned home. Ancient inscriptions from Ephesus speak of the manufacture of gold and silver statues of Artemis, and other inscriptions specifically mention the silver-worker's guild.

Paul taught that images "made by hands are not gods." (Acts 19:26) Thus, the silversmiths saw their livelihood threatened and fomented a riot to protest Paul's preaching. Demetrius, one of the silversmiths, summed up their fears, saying: "The danger exists not only that this occupation of ours will come into disrepute but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be esteemed as nothing and even her magnificence which the whole district of Asia and the inhabited earth worships is about to be brought down to nothing." —Acts 19:27.

PERHAPS you have passed a Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses in your community and wondered what takes place inside. Did you know that their weekly meetings are open to the public? Visitors are warmly welcomed.

However, you may have some questions. Why do Jehovah's Witnesses meet together? What happens at those meetings? And what do visitors who are not Jehovah's Witnesses say about the meetings?

"Congregate the People"

Since ancient times, people have gathered together to worship and learn about God. Almost 3,500 years ago, the Israelites were told: "Congregate the people, the men and the women and the little ones and your alien resident who is within your gates, in order that they may listen and in order that they may learn, as they must fear Jehovah your God and take care to carry out all the words of this law." (Deuteronomy 31:12) Thus, in Israel young and old alike were taught to worship and obey Jehovah God.

Centuries later, when the Christian congregation was formed, meetings continued to be an important feature of true worship. The apostle Paul wrote: "Let us be concerned about one another in order to promote love and good works, not staying away from our meetings, as some habitually do, but encouraging each other." (Hebrews 10:24, 25, *Holman Christian Standard Bible*) Just as family bonds are strengthened when family members spend time together, so bonds of love between those who want to serve God are strengthened when Christians meet together for worship.

In harmony with these Scriptural precedents, Jehovah's Witnesses meet together at their Kingdom Halls twice a week. The meetings help attendees to appreciate, understand, and apply Bible principles. Where

You Are Warmly Invited

possible, the program is the same worldwide, and each meeting has its own spiritual objective. Before and after the meetings, those who attend enjoy an "interchange of encouragement" by means of upbuilding conversation. (Romans 1:12) What happens at each of these meetings?

Bible Discourse

The first meeting most people attend is a Bible discourse designed for the public, which is normally held on the weekend. Jesus Christ often gave public discourses—among them the famous Sermon on the Mount. (Matthew 5:1; 7:28, 29) The apostle Paul spoke to the men of Athens. (Acts 17:22-34) Following that pattern, meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses feature a discourse especially designed for the general public, some of whom may be attending a meeting for the first time.

The meeting begins with a song from the book *Sing Praises to Jehovah*.* All who wish to stand and join in singing the song are welcome to do so. After a brief prayer, a qualified speaker delivers a 30-minute discourse. (See box "Practical Discourses for the Public.") His talk is solidly based on the Bible. The speaker frequently invites the audience to look up pertinent scriptures and to follow along as the verses are read. Therefore, you may wish to bring along your own copy of the Bible, or you may ask one of Jehovah's Witnesses for a copy of the Bible before the meeting.

* All publications referred to in this article are published by Jehovah's Witnesses.



Bible discourse



"Watchtower" Study

Watchtower Study

In most congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses, the public talk is followed by the *Watchtower* Study, a one-hour question-and-answer discussion of a Bible subject. This meeting encourages those in attendance to follow the example of the Bereans in Paul's day, who "received the word with the greatest eagerness of mind, carefully examining the Scriptures."—Acts 17:11.

The *Watchtower* Study begins with a song. The information discussed and the ques-

Practical Discourses for the Public

Bible discourses are chosen from over 170 different Scriptural themes, including the following:

- **The Origin of Humans—Does It Matter What You Believe?**
- **A Godly View of Sex and Marriage**
- **Ruining the Earth Brings Divine Retribution**
- **Coping With Life's Anxieties**
- **Is This Life All There Is?**

tions posed by the conductor appear in the study edition of this magazine. You may obtain a copy of the study edition from one of Jehovah's Witnesses. Subjects recently considered include: "Parents—Train Your Children With Love," "Return Evil for Evil to No One," and "Why All Suffering Is Soon to End." Although the meeting is conducted in a question-and-answer format, audience participation is voluntary and comments are usually given by those who have read and thought about the article and supporting scriptures beforehand. The meeting concludes with a song and prayer.—Matthew 26:30; Ephesians 5:19.

Congregation Bible Study

One evening each week, Jehovah's Witnesses meet again at the Kingdom Hall for a three-part program that lasts a total of 1 hour and 45 minutes. The first session is the Congregation Bible Study, which is 25 minutes long. It helps those who attend to become more familiar with their Bible, to adjust their thinking and attitudes, and to improve as disciples of Christ. (2 Timothy 3:16, 17) Like the *Watchtower* Study, this meeting is a



Congregation Bible Study

question-and-answer discussion of a Bible subject. Those who comment do so voluntarily. The Bible study aid is usually either a book or a brochure published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

Why is Bible-based literature used at the meeting? Back in Bible times, simply reading God's Word was not enough. "It [was] expounded, and there [was] a putting of meaning into it; and they continued giving understanding in the reading." (Nehemiah 8:8) In recent years, publications discussing the books of Isaiah, Daniel, and Revelation have helped those attending this meeting to understand these portions of the Bible.

Theocratic Ministry School

Following the Congregation Bible Study is the Theocratic Ministry School. This 30-minute meeting is designed to help Christians develop the "art of teaching." (2 Timothy 4:2) For example, has your child or a friend ever asked you a question about God or the Bible and you found it difficult to give a good reply? The Theocratic Ministry School can teach you how to give encouraging, Bible-based answers to difficult ques-



Theocratic Ministry School

tions. Thus we can echo the words of the prophet Isaiah, who declared: "The Sovereign Lord Jehovah himself has given me the tongue of the taught ones, that I may know how to answer the tired one with a word." —Isaiah 50:4.

The Theocratic Ministry School begins with a talk based on a portion of the Bible that those in attendance have been encouraged to read during the preceding week. Following the talk, the speaker invites the audience to make brief comments about aspects of the assigned reading that they found beneficial. After this discussion, students who have chosen to enroll in the school deliver their assigned presentations.

Students are assigned to read a portion of the Bible from the platform or to demonstrate how to teach a Scriptural subject to another person. After each talk, an experienced



Service Meeting

counselor commends the student on what he or she did well, basing his comments on the textbook *Benefit From Theocratic Ministry School Education*. Later, in private, he may give suggestions on how the student can improve.

This fast-moving part of the program is designed to help not only the student but also all in attendance who wish to improve their reading, speaking, and teaching skills. After the Theocratic Ministry School concludes, a song based on a passage from the Bible introduces the Service Meeting.

Service Meeting

The final section of the program is the Service Meeting. By means of talks, demonstrations, interviews, and audience participation, those in attendance learn to teach Bible truth effectively. Before sending his disciples out to preach, Jesus gathered them and gave them detailed instructions. (Luke 10:1-16) Now fully prepared for the evangelizing work, they enjoyed many interesting experiences. Later, Jesus' followers reported back to him. (Luke 10:17) The disciples often shared experiences with one another.—Acts 4:23; 15:4.

The 35-minute program for the Service Meeting is outlined in a monthly newsletter entitled *Our Kingdom Ministry*. Topics recent-

ly considered include: "Worshipping Jehovah as a Family," "Why We Go Back Again and Again," and "Imitate Christ in Your Ministry." The program concludes with a song, and a congregation member is assigned to offer a final prayer.

What Visitors Have Said

Congregations endeavor to make everyone feel welcome. For example, Andrew had heard many negative stories about Jehovah's Witnesses. But when he came to his first meeting, he was surprised by the welcome he received. "It was a delightful place to be," Andrew relates. "I was so surprised by how friendly the people were and how interested they were in me." Ashel, a teenager in Canada, agrees. "The meeting was very interesting! It was easy to follow along."

José, who lives in Brazil, had a reputation in his community for aggressive behavior. Even so, he was invited to attend a meeting at his local Kingdom Hall. "Those at the Kingdom Hall welcomed me warmly, even though they knew of my past behavior," he says. Atsushi, who lives in Japan, recalls: "I must admit that when I attended my first meeting with Jehovah's Witnesses, I felt a little out of place. Even so, I came to appreciate that these people are normal. They really tried to make me feel comfortable."

You Are Welcome

As the comments above show, attending meetings at the Kingdom Hall can be a very rewarding experience. You will learn about God, and through the Bible-based instruction you receive there, Jehovah God will teach you how "to benefit yourself."—Isaiah 48:17.

The meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses are free, and no collections are taken. Would you like to attend a meeting at the Kingdom Hall in your community? You are warmly invited to do so.

Josiah Chose to Do What Was Right

DO YOU think it's hard to do what is right?*— If you say yes, most people would agree with you. Even adults find it hard to do what they know is right. Let's see why it was especially hard for Josiah to make right choices. Do you know who he was?—

Josiah was the son of Amon, a king of Judah, who was only 16 years old when Josiah was born. Amon was very bad, as his father, King Manasseh, had been. In fact, Manasseh had been a very wicked ruler for many years. But then he was captured by the Assyrians and taken prisoner to faraway Babylon. While in prison, Manasseh begged Jehovah to forgive him, and Jehovah did.

When Manasseh was released, he returned to Jerusalem and again began to rule there as king. He right away corrected the bad things he had done and helped the people serve Jehovah. It must have made him sad when his son Amon did not follow his good example. About this time Josiah was born. The Bible does not say how much contact Manasseh had with his grandson Josiah. But do you think that Manasseh might have tried to help him to serve Jehovah?—

When Josiah was only six, Manasseh died, and Josiah's father, Amon, became king. Amon ruled for only two years before his own servants killed him. So Josiah became king of Judah at eight years of age. (2 Chronicles, chapter 33) What do you think happened then? Did Josiah choose to follow the bad example of his father, Amon, or the good example of his repentant grandfather, Manasseh?—

Even though Josiah was young, he knew that he wanted to serve Jehovah. So he listened to those who loved Jehovah, rather than to those who had been friends of his father. Josiah was only eight years old, but he knew

* If you are reading with a child, the dash provides a reminder to pause and encourage the child to express himself.

it was right to listen to people who loved God. (2 Chronicles 34:1, 2) Would you like to know something about those who advised Josiah and served as role models for him?—

Josiah was influenced by the prophet Zephaniah. He was a relative of Josiah's, for he was possibly a descendant of Manasseh's father, the good King Hezekiah. During the early part of Josiah's rule as king, Zephaniah wrote the Bible book that bears his name. Zephaniah warned of the bad things that would happen to those who did not choose to do what was right, and Josiah obviously paid attention to those warnings.

Then there was Jeremiah, whom you may have heard about before. Jeremiah and Josiah were both young men and grew up not far from each other. Jehovah inspired Jeremiah to write the book of the Bible called by his name. When Josiah died in battle, Jeremiah wrote a special song called a dirge to express his deep sorrow. (2 Chronicles 35:25) We can just imagine how they must have encouraged each other to keep faithful to Jehovah!

What do you think you can learn from studying about Josiah?— If you, like him, do not have a father who serves Jehovah, is there someone else who can help you learn about God? Maybe that person is your mother, a grandparent, or another relative. Perhaps it is someone else who serves Jehovah, someone that your mother will allow you to study the Bible with.

Whatever the case, although Josiah was only a child, he was old enough to know that he should make friends with people who serve Jehovah. May you do the same and choose to do what is right!

Questions:

- Who were Josiah's father and grandfather, and what kind of men were they?
- What change did Josiah's grandfather make in his life?
- What are the names of the two prophets who may have been a good influence on Josiah, and why do you think it is important to have friends like them?



How may Zephaniah and Jeremiah have helped Josiah do what was right?

The Bible Changes Lives

What motivated a woman who smuggled diamonds and stole from her employer to become an honest worker? What helped a woman who had twice tried to commit suicide find purpose in her life? How did an abuser of alcohol and drugs gain the strength to break free from his destructive addictions? Consider what they have to say.



PROFILE

NAME: MARGARET DEBRUYN

AGE: 45

COUNTRY: BOTSWANA

HISTORY: SMUGGLER AND THIEF



MY PAST: My father was originally from Germany but became a citizen of South-West Africa (now Namibia). My mother was from Botswana, of the Mangologa tribe. I was born in Gobabis, Namibia.

In the 1970's, the South African government exerted much control over Namibia and strictly enforced the apartheid laws throughout the towns and villages. Because my parents had an interracial marriage, they were persuaded to separate. So my mother returned with my brothers, sisters, and me to live in Ghanzi, Botswana.

In 1979, I moved to Lobatse, Botswana, and lived with foster parents while I completed my schooling. Later, I found a job as a clerk at a garage. I grew up believing that God does not provide for people, that you should do whatever you had to do—right or

wrong—to provide for yourself and your family.

Since I had a responsible position at work, I used the opportunity to steal spare parts from my employer. Whenever a train passed through town at night, my associates and I boarded it and stole what we could lay our hands on. I also became involved in smuggling diamonds, gold, and bronze. I started abusing drugs, became very violent, and had many boyfriends.

Then, in 1993, I was finally caught stealing and lost my job. My "friends" abandoned me, fearing that they too would be caught. Their reaction hurt me, and I decided to trust no one.

HOW THE BIBLE CHANGED MY LIFE: In 1994, I met Tim and Virginia, two of Je-

hovah's Witnesses who were missionaries. They talked with me at my new place of employment, helping me to learn about the Bible during my lunch hour. Later, when I felt that I could trust them, I allowed them to come to my home to study with me.

I soon realized that if I was to please God, I would need to make some changes in my lifestyle. For example, I learned from 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10 that "neither fornicators, . . . nor thieves, nor greedy persons, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit God's kingdom." One by one, I put my bad habits behind me. I stopped stealing. I stopped associating with the gangsters I had grown up with. Then, with strength from Jehovah, I chased my boyfriends out of my life.

HOW I HAVE BENEFITED: With much effort, I have learned to control my temper and not to scream at my children when something goes wrong. (Ephesians 4:31) I try to talk things over in a peaceable manner. This method of communication brings the desired results and draws us closer as a family.

My former friends, and even my neighbors, have learned that they can trust me. I have become an honest, trusted employee who can handle supplies and money conscientiously. Thus, I am able to support myself as I spend much of my time helping others learn about the Bible. I wholeheartedly agree with the words of Proverbs 10:22: "The blessing of Jehovah—that is what makes rich, and he adds no pain with it."



PROFILE

NAME: GLORIA ELIZARRARAS DE CHOPERENA

AGE: 37

COUNTRY: MEXICO

HISTORY: ATTEMPTED SUICIDE



MY PAST: I grew up in an affluent area of Naucalpan, Mexico State. From a young age, I was very rebellious and loved going to parties. I began to smoke at age 12, to drink at 14, and to take drugs at 16. A few years later, I left home. Most of my friends were from dysfunctional families, abused either physically or verbally. Life seemed so hopeless to me that twice I tried to commit suicide.

When I was 19, I started working as a model. As such, I socialized with people in politics and in the entertainment world. I eventually married and had children, but I was the one

who made all the decisions in my family. I also continued to smoke and drink, and I maintained a hectic social life. My conversation was littered with vulgar speech, and I liked to tell dirty jokes. I had a very bad temper.

Most of the people I chose to associate with had the same lifestyle. To them, it seemed as if I had everything. But my life continued to feel empty, without purpose.

HOW THE BIBLE CHANGED MY LIFE: I began studying the Bible with Jehovah's

Witnesses in 1998. The Bible taught me that life has a purpose. I learned that Jehovah God intends to restore the earth to Paradise conditions, that he will resurrect the dead, and that I could be a part of that future.

I also learned that the way to express love for God is to obey him. (1 John 5:3) This was a challenge at first because I had never accepted guidance from anyone. However, I eventually acknowledged that I could not continue directing my life by myself. (Jeremiah 10:23) I prayed to Jehovah to guide me. I asked that he help me to bring my life into harmony with his standards and to teach my children to live differently from the way I had done.

It was very difficult for me to make the necessary changes, but I began to apply the counsel found at Ephesians 4:22-24: "You should put away the old personality which conforms to your former course of conduct . . . and should put on the new personality which was created according to God's will in true righteousness and loyalty." For me, putting on the new personality meant giving up

such defiling habits as smoking, and I had to learn a new vocabulary, one without obscene words. It took me almost three years to make the needed changes so that I could be baptized as one of Jehovah's Witnesses.

In addition, I started to take seriously my role as a wife and mother. I began to apply the counsel at 1 Peter 3:1, 2: "You wives, be in subjection to your own husbands, in order that, if any are not obedient to the word, they may be won without a word through the conduct of their wives, because of having been eyewitnesses of your chaste conduct together with deep respect."

HOW I HAVE BENEFITED: I am so grateful to Jehovah because I now know that life does have meaning. I feel that I am a much better person and am able to give my children a good upbringing. Occasionally, my heart condemns me for my past actions, but Jehovah knows my heart. (1 John 3:19, 20) Without a doubt, living by Bible standards has protected me from harm and brought me inner peace.



PROFILE

NAME: **JAILSON CORREA DE OLIVEIRA**

AGE: **33**

COUNTRY: **BRAZIL**

HISTORY: **ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSER**



MY PAST: I was born in Bagé, a Brazilian city of some 100,000 people near the border between Brazil and Uruguay. Agriculture and cattle raising were the main industries. I grew up in a poor district where gangs spread violence, and alcohol and drug abuse were common among young ones.

After I left school, I began drinking, smoking marijuana, and listening to heavy-metal music. I didn't believe in God. I felt that all the suffering and chaos in the world were proof that God did not exist.

I was a guitar player and a song writer and often drew my inspiration from the Bible

book of Revelation. My band was not as successful as I expected it to be, so I began to depend more and more on hard drugs. I didn't care if I died of an overdose. Many of the singers I worshipped had ended their life that way.

I financed my drug addiction by borrowing money from my grandmother, who had raised me. I lied if she asked what I used the money for. To make matters worse, I dabbled in the occult. I was intrigued by black magic, thinking that it would enrich my musical compositions.

HOW THE BIBLE CHANGED MY LIFE: After I started studying the Bible and attending the meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses, my mental state began to change. I gradually developed a desire to live and to be happy. Motivated by this new state of mind, I decided to cut my long hair. I had let it grow as a sign of my discontent and rebellion. Then I realized that if I wanted to be acceptable to God, I had to quit abusing alcohol, give up drugs, and stop smoking. I also saw the need to change my taste in music.

The first time I attended a meeting of Jehovah's Witnesses, I noticed a Scripture text that was displayed on one of the walls. It was from Proverbs 3:5, 6, and it read: "Trust in Jehovah with all your heart and do not lean upon your own understanding. In all your ways take notice of him, and he himself will make your paths straight." Thinking about that scripture assured me that Jehovah would help me restructure my life if I let him.

Still, changing my deeply rooted lifestyle and quitting addictions that involved substance abuse was as difficult as cutting off my own hand. (Matthew 18:8, 9) I couldn't make these sorts of changes gradually. I knew that way wouldn't work in my case. So I quit my bad habits cold turkey. I also avoid-

ed all places and people that might lure me back into my old, destructive lifestyle.

I learned to take pride in my daily accomplishments, not concentrating on moments of discouragement. I felt it would be an honor to be physically, morally, and spiritually clean in Jehovah's eyes. I prayed for and received Jehovah's help not to look back at my old ways but to look ahead. Sometimes I relapsed. But I still insisted on having my personal Bible study with my instructor, even though at times I had a hangover.

Learning the truth about God from the Bible—that he cares for us as individuals, that he will destroy false religion, and that he is now backing a worldwide preaching work—made sense to me. (Matthew 7:21-23; 24:14; 1 Peter 5:6, 7) These facts fit together

*"I gradually developed
a desire to live and
to be happy"*

like pieces in a puzzle. Finally, I decided to dedicate my life to God. I wanted to show my gratitude for all he had done for me.

HOW I HAVE BENEFITED: I now feel that my life has direction and meaning. (Ecclesiastes 12:13) And instead of taking from my family, I've been able to give something back. I shared the good things I learned from the Bible with my grandmother, and she has now dedicated herself to Jehovah. Several other members of my family and one of my former band members have done the same.

I am now married, and my wife and I spend the majority of our time helping others learn about the Bible. I feel richly rewarded because I have learned to 'trust in Jehovah with all my heart.'

Our Readers Ask

WHY DO JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES NOT USE IMAGES IN THEIR WORSHIP?

Around the globe, Hindus, Buddhists, Catholics, and members of the Orthodox Church view the use of idols, images, or icons as a vital part of their worship. In parts of Africa, people venerate carvings of wood or stone in which a god or the spirit of a god is thought to dwell.

In contrast, Jehovah's Witnesses do not use any form of idol or icon in their worship. If you visit the places where they meet, known as Kingdom Halls, you will find neither icons of "saints" nor statues of Jesus or Mary.* Why not? Note what the Bible says on this subject.

What Did God Require of the Israelites?

After liberating the Israelites from Egypt, Jehovah God gave them clear direction regarding how he wanted to be worshipped. The second of the so-called Ten Commandments says: "You must not make for yourself a carved image or a form like anything that is in the heavens above or that is on the earth underneath or that is in the waters under the earth. You must not bow down to them nor be induced to serve them, because I Jehovah your God am a God exacting exclusive devotion." —Exodus 20:4, 5.

* Some Kingdom Halls display paintings of Bible characters. However, these pictures are used for decoration and are not venerated as religious icons. Jehovah's Witnesses do not pray to these pictures, nor do they bow down to them.



At the very time that God was giving these commandments to Moses, the Israelites were making a golden calf, likely in imitation of Egyptian animal worship. They did not call the image by the name of an Egyptian god. Instead, they associated it with the worship of Jehovah. (Exodus 32:5, 6) How did God react? His anger blazed against those who venerated the idol, and Moses destroyed it.—Exodus 32:9, 10, 19, 20.

Later, Jehovah God elaborated on the second commandment. Through Moses, he reminded the Israelites that they must not make for themselves "a carved image, the form of any symbol, the representation of male or female, the representation of any beast that is in the earth, the representation of any winged bird that flies in the heavens, the representation of anything moving on the ground, the representation of any fish that is in the waters under the earth." (Deuteronomy 4:15-18) Clearly, the Israelites were not to use idols of any shape or form in the worship of God.

Nevertheless, Israel later fell into idolatry. To correct them, Jehovah dispatched prophets who warned of impending punishment because of their idolatrous worship. (Jeremiah 19:3-5; Amos 2:8) As a nation, Israel ignored God's warnings. Therefore, in 607 B.C.E., Jehovah allowed the Babylonians to destroy Jerusalem and take the nation into captivity.—2 Chronicles 36:20, 21; Jeremiah 25:11, 12.



What Did the First-Century Christians Believe?

When non-Jews converted to Christianity in the first century, they did not continue to use idols in their worship of God. Note what Demetrius, a silversmith who made idols in Ephesus, said about the apostle Paul's preaching: "Men, you well know that from this business we have our prosperity. Also, you behold and hear how not only in Ephesus but in nearly all the district of Asia this Paul has persuaded a considerable crowd and turned them to another opinion, saying that the ones that are made by hands are not gods."—Acts 19:25, 26.

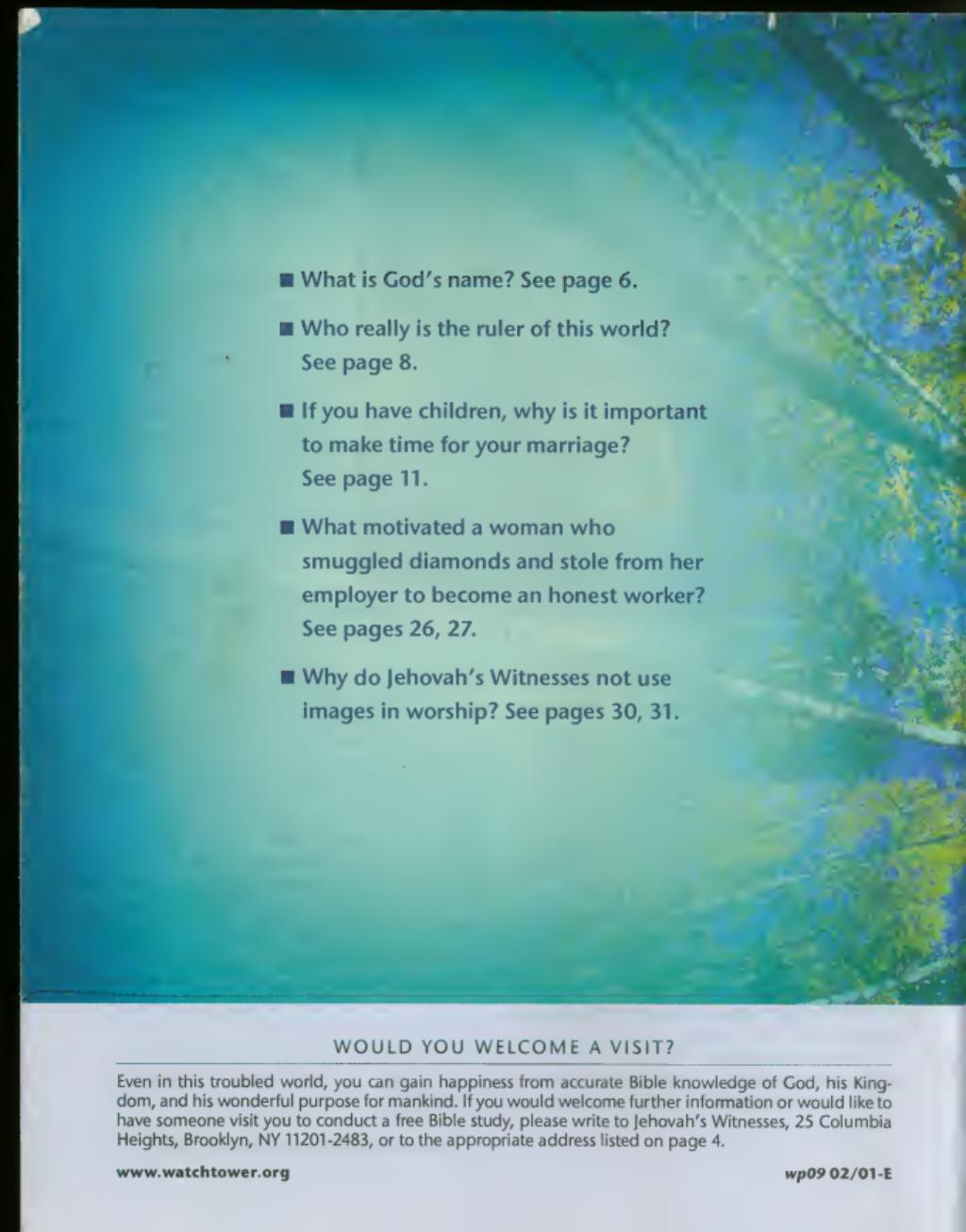
Paul's own words confirm the accusation made by Demetrius. When speaking to the Greeks in Athens, Paul said: "We ought not to imagine that the Divine Being is like gold or silver or stone, like something sculptured by the art and contrivance of man. True, God has

overlooked the times of such ignorance, yet now he is telling mankind that they should all everywhere repent." (Acts 17:29, 30) On the same subject, Paul wrote to those in Thessalonica and commended them with the words: "You turned to God from your idols."—1 Thessalonians 1:9.

Not only Paul but also the apostle John warned Christians against using images in their worship. At the end of the first century, John firmly told them: "Guard yourselves from idols."—1 John 5:21.

Jehovah's Witnesses obey God's clear direction not to use images of any sort when they worship him. They take Jehovah God at his word when he says: "I am Jehovah. That is my name; and to no one else shall I give my own glory, neither my praise to graven images."—Isaiah 42:8.

"I am Jehovah.
That is my name;
and to no one
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—Isaiah 42:8

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- What is God's name? See page 6.
 - Who really is the ruler of this world?
See page 8.
 - If you have children, why is it important
to make time for your marriage?
See page 11.
 - What motivated a woman who
smuggled diamonds and stole from her
employer to become an honest worker?
See pages 26, 27.
 - Why do Jehovah's Witnesses not use
images in worship? See pages 30, 31.

WOULD YOU WELCOME A VISIT?

Even in this troubled world, you can gain happiness from accurate Bible knowledge of God, his Kingdom, and his wonderful purpose for mankind. If you would welcome further information or would like to have someone visit you to conduct a free Bible study, please write to Jehovah's Witnesses, 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, NY 11201-2483, or to the appropriate address listed on page 4.